



## Ambassador's Corner

**H**appy New Year! This is a time of reflection and hope, of looking back and forward, of celebrating success and reviewing lessons learned, and of drawing inspiration for the challenges ahead.

Allow me, first, to congratulate and thank our PEPFAR partners, who in 2008 advanced HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment in all programmatic and geographic areas (see PEPFAR results on Page 2). Perhaps the most dramatic successes came in the HIV counseling and testing program, which more than doubled its results, and in caring for orphans and vulnerable children, which grew by two-thirds. Our partners' plans for 2009 promise even better results, at greater cost-efficiency, with priorities that include HIV prevention, the reduction of gender-based vulnerability and violence, and the transition to sustainable national ownership.

The new year will be a time of change and challenges. Like Côte d'Ivoire itself, which is moving from crisis toward stability and elections, the PEPFAR program is poised for change – new leadership in Washington and (as we recruit a country coordinator) in Abidjan, new opportunities for the second five-year phase of PEPFAR. What remains unchanged is the U.S. government's commitment to confronting HIV/AIDS by working in partnership, guided by the vision of the Ivorian government, to stop the spread of HIV and improve the lives of the millions infected or affected by HIV in Côte d'Ivoire. Working together, yes, we can.

All the best for 2009.



**Wanda L. Nesbitt**  
U.S. Ambassador

## 'I've regained my smile'

### Training makes life safer, easier for health workers

**F**or Jules N'Guessan, the care supervisor at the General Hospital of Port Bouet in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, needle-stick injuries were a daily worry so frequent and frightening that colleagues threatened to quit the profession.

In 2003, it happened to him. While taking care of a patient, N'Guessan was accidentally stuck with a used needle. Panicked, his first thought was to cut off his thumb. He underwent testing for HIV and Hepatitis B and fortunately was reconfirmed negative three months later.

"Two of my colleagues weren't as lucky as I was," says the 43-year-old father of three. "One has chronic hepatitis, and the other is HIV-positive."

N'Guessan decided to bring this issue to the attention of the hospital director. The director asked N'Guessan to organize a training course on injection safety and medical waste management through the Ministry of Health with the support of PEPFAR partner John Snow Inc. (JSI) under the MMIS project (Making Medical



Care Supervisor Jules N'Guessan observes an employee disposing of a syringe in a safety box at the General Hospital of Port Bouet, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Injections Safer). JSI/MMIS has supported the training of 1,603 health personnel in safe injection practices and waste management in FY08 alone, and works to prevent medical transmission of HIV and other blood-borne diseases.

Learning not to recap needles, and to use retractable syringes and safety disposal boxes has reduced both the risk of needle injuries and the stress on health

district staff, N'Guessan says.

Furthermore, the provision of safe-injection devices and individual protective gear through the MMIS project, along with regular supervision of health workers and managers, has made the district's health centers more popular places to work.

"My colleagues don't complain about needle sticks anymore, and they provide care safely and confidently," he says.

Now an enthusiastic proponent of reducing unnecessary injections, N'Guessan works with greater assurance: "As for myself, I've regained my smile, as well as the trust of the director."

## Success Story

## First university-based HIV testing site opens in Cocody

**C**ôte d'Ivoire's first university-based HIV testing center opened in December at the University of Cocody in Abidjan with the joint support of PEPFAR partner ACONDA-VS, the local NGO MESSI, and the university health service. On opening day, 224 students stood in line to be tested.

Integrated in the university's health center, free HIV testing is offered five days a week. University medical and lab staff are comple-

mented by trained counselors from MESSI. Students who test HIV-positive receive free medical care and are assigned a counselor to provide home-based psychosocial care.

"This is an important step for us, because these students are the future of our country," said MESSI President Kouadio Georges. "Prevention through testing is essential."

Nationwide this year, the number of testing sites supported by PEPFAR is expected to grow from 209 to 488.



Students line up for HIV counseling and testing at the country's first university-based testing site.

## New Partner

**Who:** University Research Company (URC)

**Country Director:** Dr. N'Guessan T. Jean Hervé

**What:** URC is our lead partner for quality assurance. Its Healthcare Improvement Project provides technical assistance to PEPFAR implementing partners to assess, improve, and monitor the quality of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment interventions.



N'Guessan

improve, and monitor the quality of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment interventions.

**Prevention:** URC will help develop national standards for core competencies of peer counselors, with indicators, systems, and tools to supervise staff, standardize training, and measure outcomes of peer-education programs.

**ART treatment and PMTCT:** URC works to optimize health outcomes for people with HIV by improving the identification and retention of patients, and by assuring the quality of care they receive. Based on a quality assessment in 2008, URC is working with the National HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment Program (PNPEC) and other partners to develop and implement strategies for rapidly improving the quality of care using the improvement collaborative approach, as well as to build the capacity of the PNPEC, partners, supervisors, and facility staff to design and implement a program to continuously improve the quality of HIV clinical services.

**Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC):** URC supports the National OVC Program (PNOEV) to define quality using service standards, plan for continuous quality improvement, and engage care providers in quality-improvement processes, always guided by the essential question: what measurable differences do OVC programs make in children's lives?

**When:** Started activities in Côte d'Ivoire in January 2008.

**Where:** At central and provider levels nationwide.

**What else:** URC provides technical support for quality improvement in 16 countries.

**How to contact:** 22 52 99 87; Web: [www.urc-chs.com](http://www.urc-chs.com), [www.hciproject.org](http://www.hciproject.org), [www.ovcsupport.net](http://www.ovcsupport.net).

## PEPFAR funds expand research agenda

PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire has received approval to invest \$1,679,753 in FY 2009 in a public health evaluation (PHE) portfolio designed to strengthen the program's evidence base for decision-making in PMTCT, HIV counseling and testing, and antiretroviral treatment.

Two country-specific evaluations begun with FY 2008 funding will be continued to assess the effectiveness of the ART program supported by the USG in Côte d'Ivoire, and the quality of infant feeding and nutrition services at PMTCT sites. A new country-specific PHE will evaluate care and treatment of patients with HIV-2 infection; its findings will have implications for all countries where HIV-2 infection is significant and will provide data for WHO evidence-based guidelines on HIV-2.

The program also plans to participate in three multi-country PHEs to assess 1) interventions to reduce early mortality among patients initiating ART, 2) PMTCT program models, and 3) HIV testing program models.

## Scaling Up: 2008 PEPFAR Results

PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire's successes in FY 2008 included dramatic growth in the HIV counseling and testing program, which more than doubled its results, and in care for orphans and vulnerable children (65% increase).

	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
<b>PMTCT sites</b>	44	69	146	<b>236</b>
<b>HIV-positive pregnant women receiving ARV prophylaxis</b>	1,888	3,997	4,963	<b>4,620</b>
<b>HIV counseling and testing sites</b>	54	81	159	<b>209</b>
<b>Persons tested, given results</b>	23,708	66,972	90,870	<b>206,147</b>
<b>Persons receiving palliative care</b>	25,902	42,561	74,319	<b>84,270</b>
<b>Orphans &amp; vulnerable children receiving care and support</b>	7,946	22,566	41,147	<b>68,061</b>
<b>ART sites</b>	33	58	99	<b>160</b>
<b>Persons receiving ART</b>	11,097	20,923	34,900	<b>39,324</b>

## News in Brief

Activists from all over the country gathered in Yopougon for World AIDS Day 2008. Under the theme "Strong Leadership for a Future Without AIDS," the celebration included a parade, speeches, and community outreach activities.

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The National Blood Transfusion Service of

Côte d'Ivoire just completed a national knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) survey to identify perceptions of blood donation and improve donation efforts. Results of this study are forthcoming.

\* \* \*

JHU/CCP conducted a production workshop for the "Radio Diaries" pro-

ject, which is expected to launch in the coming months. Four Ivoirians will record radio segments on their experience living with HIV/AIDS.

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CDC Côte d'Ivoire will be holding its next online ethics training on February 12 and March 12 at Project Retro-CI. Any CDC partners who are

conducting research should register. For more information, contact Deborah N'guessan at [nguessany@ci.cdc.gov](mailto:nguessany@ci.cdc.gov).

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PEPFAR has submitted its fifth annual report, "Celebrate Life," to Congress, highlighting the power of partnerships in global HIV/AIDS. View the report at: <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/c19573.htm>



Youth lead the parade during the 2008 World AIDS Day

## Contribute to PEPtalk!

Do you have a news item, a story idea, a good photo, an insightful commentary on an important issue? Share it. Send it to us at [peptalk@ci.cdc.gov](mailto:peptalk@ci.cdc.gov). Please include your name, affiliation, and contact information.

**Contributors to PEPtalk No. 5:**

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## Comings & Goings



New PEPFAR Palliative Care Technical Advisor, **Dr. Ivanne Amon**



Interim PEPFAR Coordinator, **Jim Allman**